

## Beowulf XXVIII-XXX

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**HASTENED** the hardy one, henchmen with him,  
sandy strand of the sea to tread  
and widespread ways. The world's great candle,  
sun shone from south. They strode along  
with sturdy steps to the spot they knew  
where the battle-king young, his burg within,  
slayer of Ongentheow, shared the rings,  
shelter-of-heroes. To Hygelac  
Beowulf's coming was quickly told, --  
that there in the court the clansmen's refuge,  
the shield-companion sound and alive,  
hale from the hero-play homeward strode.  
With haste in the hall, by highest order,  
room for the rovers was readily made.  
By his sovran he sat, come safe from battle,  
kinsman by kinsman. His kindly lord  
he first had greeted in gracious form,  
with manly words. The mead dispensing,  
came through the high hall Haereth's daughter,  
winsome to warriors, wine-cup bore  
to the hands of the heroes. Hygelac then  
his comrade fairly with question plied  
in the lofty hall, sore longing to know  
what manner of sojourn the Sea-Geats made.  
"What came of thy quest, my kinsman Beowulf,  
when thy yearnings suddenly swept thee yonder  
battle to seek o'er the briny sea,  
combat in Heorot? Hrothgar couldst thou  
aid at all, the honored chief,  
in his wide-known woes? With waves of care  
my sad heart seethed; I sore mistrusted  
my loved one's venture: long I begged thee  
by no means to seek that slaughtering monster,  
but suffer the South-Danes to settle their feud  
themselves with Grendel. Now God be thanked  
that safe and sound I can see thee now!"

Beowulf spake, the bairn of Ecgtheow:--  
"Tis known and unhidden, Hygelac Lord,  
to many men, that meeting of ours,  
struggle grim between Grendel and me,  
which we fought on the field where full too many  
sorrows he wrought for the Scylding-Victors,

evils unending. These all I avenged.  
No boast can be from breed of Grendel,  
any on earth, for that uproar at dawn,  
from the longest-lived of the loathsome race  
in fleshly fold! -- But first I went  
Hrothgar to greet in the hall of gifts,  
where Healfdene's kinsman high-renowned,  
soon as my purpose was plain to him,  
assigned me a seat by his son and heir.  
The liegemen were lusty; my life-days never  
such merry men over mead in hall  
have I heard under heaven! The high-born queen,  
people's peace-bringer, passed through the hall,  
cheered the young clansmen, clasps of gold,  
ere she sought her seat, to sundry gave.  
Oft to the heroes Hrothgar's daughter,  
to earls in turn, the ale-cup tendered, --  
she whom I heard these hall-companions  
Freawaru name, when fretted gold  
she proffered the warriors. Promised is she,  
gold-decked maid, to the glad son of Froda.  
Sage this seems to the Scylding's-friend,  
kingdom's-keeper: he counts it wise  
the woman to wed so and ward off feud,  
store of slaughter. But seldom ever  
when men are slain, does the murder-spear sink  
but briefest while, though the bride be fair! [footnote 1]

"Nor haply will like it the Heathobard lord,  
and as little each of his liegemen all,  
when athane of the Danes, in that doughty throng,  
goes with the lady along their hall,  
and on him the old-time heirlooms glisten  
hard and ring-decked, Heathobard's treasure,  
weapons that once they wielded fair  
until they lost at the linden-play [footnote 2]  
liegeman leal and their lives as well.  
Then, over the ale, on this heirloom gazing,  
some ash-wielder old who has all in mind  
that spear-death of men, [footnote 3] -- he is stern of mood,  
heavy at heart, -- in the hero young  
tests the temper and tries the soul  
and war-hate wakens, with words like these:--  
Canst thou not, comrade, ken that sword  
which to the fray thy father carried  
in his final feud, 'neath the fighting-mask,

dearest of blades, when the Danish slew him  
 and wielded the war-place on Withergild's fall,  
 after havoc of heroes, those hardy Scyldings?  
 Now, the son of a certain slaughtering Dane,  
 proud of his treasure, paces this hall,  
 joys in the killing, and carries the jewel [footnote 4]  
 that rightfully ought to be owned by thee!  
 Thus he urges and eggs him all the time  
 with keenest words, till occasion offers  
 that Freawaru's thane, for his father's deed,  
 after bite of brand in his blood must slumber,  
 losing his life; but that liegeman flies  
 living away, for the land he kens.  
 And thus be broken on both their sides  
 oaths of the earls, when Ingeld's breast  
 wells with war-hate, and wife-love now  
 after the care-billows cooler grows.  
 "So [footnote 5] I hold not high the Heathobards' faith  
 due to the Danes, or their during love  
 and pact of peace. -- But I pass from that,  
 turning to Grendel, O giver-of-treasure,  
 and saying in full how the fight resulted,  
 hand-fray of heroes. When heaven's jewel  
 had fled o'er far fields, that fierce sprite came,  
 night-foe savage, to seek us out  
 where safe and sound we sentried the hall.  
 To Hondscio then was that harassing deadly,  
 his fall there was fated. He first was slain,  
 girded warrior. Grendel on him  
 turned murderous mouth, on our mighty kinsman,  
 and all of the brave man's body devoured.  
 Yet none the earlier, empty-handed,  
 would the bloody-toothed murderer, mindful of bale,  
 outward go from the gold-decked hall:  
 but me he attacked in his terror of might,  
 with greedy hand grasped me. A glove hung by him [footnote 6]  
 wide and wondrous, wound with bands;  
 and in artful wise it all was wrought,  
 by devilish craft, of dragon-skins.  
 Me therein, an innocent man,  
 the fiendish foe was fain to thrust  
 with many another. He might not so,  
 when I all angrily upright stood.  
 'Twere long to relate how that land-destroyer  
 I paid in kind for his cruel deeds;  
 yet there, my prince, this people of thine

got fame by my fighting. He fled away,  
and a little space his life preserved;  
but there staid behind him his stronger hand  
left in Heorot; heartsick thence  
on the floor of the ocean that outcast fell.  
Me for this struggle the Scyldings'-friend  
paid in plenty with plates of gold,  
with many a treasure, when morn had come  
and we all at the banquet-board sat down.  
Then was song and glee. The gray-haired Scylding,  
much tested, told of the times of yore.  
Whiles the hero his harp bestirred,  
wood-of-delight; now lays he chanted  
of sooth and sadness, or said aright  
legends of wonder, the wide-hearted king;  
or for years of his youth he would yearn at times,  
for strength of old struggles, now stricken with age,  
hoary hero: his heart surged full  
when, wise with winters, he wailed their flight.  
Thus in the hall the whole of that day  
at ease we feasted, till fell o'er earth  
another night. Anon full ready  
in greed of vengeance, Grendel's mother  
set forth all doleful. Dead was her son  
through war-hate of Weders; now, woman monstrous  
with fury fell a foeman she slew,  
avenged her offspring. From Aeschere old,  
loyal councillor, life was gone;  
nor might they e'en, when morning broke,  
those Danish people, their death-done comrade  
burn with brands, on balefire lay  
the man they mourned. Under mountain stream  
she had carried the corpse with cruel hands.  
For Hrothgar that was the heaviest sorrow  
of all that had laden the lord of his folk.  
The leader then, by thy life, besought me  
(sad was his soul) in the sea-waves' coil  
to play the hero and hazard my being  
for glory of prowess: my guerdon he pledged.  
I then in the waters -- 'tis widely known --  
that sea-floor-guardian savage found.  
Hand-to-hand there a while we struggled;  
billows welled blood; in the briny hall  
her head I hewed with a hardy blade  
from Grendel's mother, -- and gained my life,  
though not without danger. My doom was not yet.

Then the haven-of-heroes, Healfdene's son,  
gave me in guerdon great gifts of price.

### **Footnotes.**

**1.**

Beowulf gives his uncle the king not mere gossip of his journey, but a statesmanlike forecast of the outcome of certain policies at the Danish court. Talk of interpolation here is absurd. As both Beowulf and Hygelac know, -- and the folk for whom the Beowulf was put together also knew, -- Froda was king of the Heathobards (probably the Langobards, once near neighbors of Angle and Saxon tribes on the continent), and had fallen in fight with the Danes. Hrothgar will set aside this feud by giving his daughter as "peace-weaver" and wife to the young king Ingeld, son of the slain Froda. But Beowulf, on general principles and from his observation of the particular case, foretells trouble.

**2.**

Play of shields, battle. A Danish warrior cuts down Froda in the fight, and takes his sword and armor, leaving them to a son. This son is selected to accompany his mistress, the young princess Freawaru, to her new home when she is Ingeld's queen. Heedlessly he wears the sword of Froda in hall. An old warrior points it out to Ingeld, and eggs him on to vengeance. At his instigation the Dane is killed; but the murderer, afraid of results, and knowing the land, escapes. So the old feud must break out again.

**3.**

That is, their disastrous battle and the slaying of their king.

**4.**

The sword.

**5.**

Beowulf returns to his forecast. Things might well go somewhat as follows, he says; sketches a little tragic story; and with this prophecy by illustration returns to the tale of his adventure.

**6.**

Not an actual glove, but a sort of bag.